

**MULTI
—PLO**



Tania Marmolejo

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Tania Marmolejo was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic in 1975 to a Swedish mother and a Dominican father. She grew up surrounded by art and today uses her mixed heritage to develop her talent for drawing, design and painting. After studying at the end of the 90s, in Altos de Chavón, known as the "City of Artists", she obtained the Bluhdorn scholarship and continued her studies in Fine Arts and Illustration at Parsons The New School for Design, New York. A stage of constant experimentation passed, combining art with design, illustration and fashion.

In 2005 Marmolejo joined the group of artists represented by MadArts Studios in Brooklyn, NY, and District and Co. Gallery in Santo Domingo. Her work began to be exhibited collectively in different places, nationally and internationally, and gradually she concentrated more on painting. The large female faces were represented on the canvas as an act of rebellion and reaffirmation towards unprejudiced beauty, without chromatic "corrections" that place women within a particular race or style.

In relevant fairs and biennials such as Scope, Context Art and the Ibero-American Design Biennial (BID), Madrid, Tania's paintings do not go unseen by the visitor. The exalted eyes with an expressive look and the disobedient hair, are a call to attention towards the recognition of women as a key figure in society. The timeless expression of

facial features suggests that it does not matter where we came from but where we are going.

Marmolejo is part of the book "Dominicans off the charts. 150 women who transformed the Dominican Republic", by Geraldine de Santis, 2021 and she is the author of the books "I doodle therefore I am" and "To doodle or not to doodle". Among her most recent solo exhibitions is "Anacaona's Revenge", Eligere Gallery, Seoul, South Korea, 2021. Her work is part of important private collections such as the Xiao Museum of Contemporary Art in Rizhao, China and she currently lives and works in New York.

Reina y su Reino

33 x 34 in (83.8 x 86.3 cm)

Fine art archival giclee print on archival cold press cotton rag 300gsm

Edition of 35

Hand-embellished by the artist making each print unique.



We are happy for our first collaboration with artist Tania Marmolejo

Reina y su Reino, is a limited edition of 35. 33 x 34 in (83.8 x 86.3 cm). Fine art archival giclee print on archival cold press cotton rag 300gsm

“Art should be democratic, it is life-changing to have art surround you, and this is a great opportunity to have that experience as a new collector. I also love the idea of having a project in Latin America, yet that is accessible to anyone around the world.” -Tania Marmolejo

Queen and her Kingdom

– Tania Marmolejo

By Maylin Pérez

In 1887, the Dominican writer Salomé Ureña recited the poem “Mi ofrenda a la Patria / My offering to the Homeland”, of which I highlight the following fragment:

**And if progress and peace and independence
show the orb your ambition yearning,
strong, as shielded in her conscience,
of their own sovereign destinies,
to be a light and guide from home
Let us form the Dominican woman.**

Coming from a multicultural family: How were your beginnings as a woman artist in your born country?

I basically was born holding a pencil! I drew from a very early age and had the support of my parents when they realized it would be a life-long obsession. Both my grandmothers- Swedish and Dominican- were artistic, so art was in the family.

After studying, at the end of the 90s, in Altos de Chavón, known as the “City of Artists”, you obtained the Bluhdorn scholarship and continued the studies in Fine Arts and Illustration at Parsons The New School for Design, New York. If you compare it with your previous stage, what are the differences that you experienced between Chavón and Parsons?

Chavón was the place that taught me to refine my art, to understand how to better produce what I had learned as a self-taught artist. It was the most intense 2 years of my life, where I lived and breathed art. Parsons was more a place to make contacts, understand how the creative commercial world functioned.

Your training is multidisciplinary and from the beginning you have also worked in design. When and how was the transition to painting?

I always painted, but also always loved illustration and graphic

design. Actually- all design- architecture, interiors, fashion. So, I felt I wanted to try everything, and found I loved designing prints and textiles. I worked for several years as a print designer. I then realized what I wanted to do most was continue painting and exhibiting and had to make a decision instead of trying to do everything by dividing my time. Once I dedicated all my time to painting, things really started working for me.

Most of your works are known for female portraits with their own original identity and expressive eyes. Do you have any special reason why you work with large format and what is the challenge that your “characters” face?

I did not always paint in large format. The change happened when I was told my art was “too feminine” and maybe I needed to change it. So, I did. I blew up the faces and made them huge, as a protest. Little did I know they would suddenly catch everyone’s attention. The challenge I face is to keep the expressions ambiguous and interesting. I’m not interested in “pretty” faces, I’d like them to be a little strange and disquieting.

The process: How would you describe a day of work in your studio?

I am very disciplined, so it begins around 8, 9 am, and I just paint. Either starting a new painting or finishing an older one, I am always creating, experimenting.

Previously I mentioned that you come from a multicultural family as you are the daughter of a Swedish mother, a Dominican father and reside for several years in New York. How does this influence your work by having an expanded vision of humanity?

It influences my work because there is no “correct color”, no “correct skin tone”, no “correct features”. I am very open-minded and loving of humanity as a whole, and it is the differences that I love. I like to “merge” features and

characteristics and create my own characters that don't seem to belong to any particular "type".

During the prolonged crisis by the Coronavirus, art has proven its importance today and there has been an awakening to collect more emerging works. Do you think that women artists have gained more visibility?

I do and I am living proof. I've never seen so many exhibitions that feature women artists as I have during and post-pandemic, and I've never been invited to show in so many galleries. There has been an awakening. People want to see honesty and variety and newness, and new points of view.

With more than 20 thousand followers on Instagram, many people access your work for different reasons. Do you consider that social media is an effective way to promote artists?

I love Instagram. It has been very good to me and my career as an artist. For artists visibility is so important, and social media is visibility. I am grateful for it.

You have been invited to collaborate with Multiplo in the launch of an exclusive serigraphy of the work "Reina y su Reino", 2021. What are your expectations with this new project?

I am very excited to show my work to an audience that maybe isn't familiar with it at all. The different price point that a print present is a great way to get people interested in collecting that perhaps wouldn't be able to otherwise. Art should be democratic, it is life-changing to have art surround you, and this is a great opportunity to have that experience as a new collector. I also love the idea of having a project in Latin America, yet that is accessible to anyone around the world.

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TANIA MARMOLEJO



Press

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Lyle O. Reitzel Gallery presents a new Solo Show by Dominican artist living in New York, Tania Marmolejo (b. 1975), with the name “Here Versus There”. The opening will take place Friday, April 13th, 2018, in the Gallery located in New York.

This exhibition; ‘Here Versus There’, displays an exquisite collection of recent drawings and paintings by Tania Marmolejo. Influenced by her mixed heritage, this body of works is heavily inspired by her Swedish and Dominican upbringing. The large-scale ambiguous female facial expressions in her paintings explore issues of gender and her identity as a Scandinavian Caribbean female artist.

“I believe in the middle ground. Not the tame, ‘I give up’ middle ground, but the tense, uncomfortable point that provokes reflection and thought when confronted with opposing ideas, emotions, and forces. In Here Versus There, I search for that ambiguous middle point between opposing forces in myself and communicate them with the viewer, hoping to provoke, in turn, a mirrored feeling. The minimalist drawings which are the beginnings of my painting process may become a spider’s web of complicated storytelling of opposing thoughts or may become an ambiguous, anxious expression in a painted character eager to tell her story but not certain that she should. In the center (or end) of it all, are landscapes that still do not manage to escape the opposing forces, trying to be peaceful and yet anxiously narrative themselves, caught between an eternal Here Versus There.” – Tania Marmolejo

Tania Marmolejo studied Fine Arts, Graphic Design and Illustration in Norway, the Altos de Chavón School of Design (La Romana, Dominican Republic) and Parsons, The New School for Design (New York). She has participated alongside Lyle O. Reitzel Gallery in PINTA New York, The Modern & Contemporary Latinamerican Art Fair in its 2011 and 2010 editions, as well as Context Art Miami 2012 during Art Basel. Marmolejo has also been part of collective shows such as “The Vagina Monologues” at Columbia Presbyterian (New York), “HYBRIDS: Dominican Art” at Queens Museum of Art (New York) and various editions of the Ibero-American Art Salon at Katzen Art Center (Washington DC).



What are you hoping to achieve in these representations of female portraiture?

With my paintings, I hope to achieve a certain communication between myself and the viewer- a curious new emotion, a “wink-wink” recognition of an experience, a pause in trying to determine a certain ambivalent expression that will guide them through the experience of being “female”, that I am narrating.

How did you begin constructing these faces? What is your process as an artist?

The faces began as an outlet to emotions, that became characters in themselves, portrayed quite close-up in my paintings. I am now stepping back from the close-ups allowing more of the environment to peek through, creating a more narrative approach, sometimes adding more characters as a snapshot of a scene based on my emotions.

What artists have inspired you and your work?

I’ve always been inspired by the raw emotion of the German Expressionists, the compositions and technique of Renaissance paintings, American and Scandinavian Folk art’s use of color and compositions, and other collective movements more than artists themselves. There is too much I am inspired by that one artist couldn’t possibly capture it all.

How have you found inspiration recently and during quarantine?

I had been “stuck” in the Dominican Republic during quarantine and found a lot of inspiration in the environment there. I painted a collection “In The Time Of Isolation”, inspired by those emotions and anxieties while in quarantine. Now that I am back in NY, and there is more optimism with the development of vaccines, I find I am painting thinking more of the future, and there is a lightness and slight comedy in the newer paintings.

How do you see your other artistic ventures like graphic, textile, and character design merging with or informing your painting?

The character design is very present, it is the strongest “arm” that decides the outcome of my art. I enjoy painting characters and faces. The textile and graphic design show themselves in some compositions, decisive use of color and repetition of elements.

How has your painting progressed through the years?

I began painting more expressively, (loose, dripping paint, abstraction of backgrounds) and now the paintings are more decided, with tighter compositions and finishes- that come from-I believe- my intention of creating a clear narrative in the painting.

Having lived in so many different places, how do you find they influence your art

The Dominican Republic, where I grew up, definitely influenced a fearlessness in applying bold colors. Scandinavia, my other heritage-influenced a more subtle palette, with secondary, cooler tones that I experienced in Sweden and Norway. The mix of the two extremes is what most determines my use of color. New York exposed me to boldness and the importance of having your individual language. My language is the mix between my two heritages- sometimes more of a tug of war than a symbiosis.

07/06/2022

North by Southwest: Tania Marmolejo Andersson's Global Folk Art

JUXTAPOZ
Art & Culture



New York-based artist Tania Marmolejo, fashion illustrator, commercial artist, author and painter, is a creative jack of all trades. Her Dominican and Scandinavian ancestry germinates a unique heritage that births a bold and arresting fine art style. On the eve of her solo show at GR Gallery in NYC opening June 10, 2022, Juxtapoz sat down with Tania to discuss how such a lineage influences her work, how movement plays into the practice, as well as some current artists on her radar.

Evan Pricco: Do you remember the first piece of art that moved you?

Tania Marmolejo: I believe it must have been paintings by my maternal grandmother in Sweden. She passed away before I was born, but her art—paintings and drawings—were amazing and always captivated me. I would sit and study them for hours in my grandfather's house and my own. I now have her sketchbook, which is my most prized possession, and I still love looking through it. Her drawings definitely were the biggest influence on my own drawing and painting as I grew up. Both my grandmothers were artistic, but my maternal grandmother had the doodles and cartoonish style that were more my taste. I have always felt connected to her through my art.

You have both Dominican and Scandinavian lineage, and I wonder what you have gleaned from each of their artistic influences, especially because both are rich in folk art traditions. And, where do you see your ancestry converging when you paint?

I am definitely influenced by both lineages. Sometimes they present themselves separately, where a painting is definitely more “Caribbean” in color and theme, or “Scandinavian” in its moodiness and color story. The Dominican influence seeps through me in bright colors, especially the blues and greens of the mountains and nature around where I grew up. The incredible color of the water- turquoise, and sometimes a darker skin tone in the character. The Scandinavian influence shows in a darker palette in the backgrounds, also influenced by the Swedish children's books about trolls and fairies that I grew up reading, and the blonder characters that many times are directly influenced by my mother. Sometimes in a painting I will mix the influences, and strange

color combinations and moods arise, which I really like because that's basically me: A muddy, colorful mix of influences.

What do you think is the hardest thing for an artist to explain about process? And here I am, asking you! I think what I mean is, what part of the process of making a painting, at what stage, is it just instinct?

I don't mind explaining my process! I don't like writing artist statements though, because my intentions and themes change as I work. Each artist has their own process that determines the outcome of their work, so it may be the most important part of creating. I do not sketch my works in advance, for example, as my work is completely expressionistic. I never know what the painting will actually look like in the end. I may have an idea, a certain plan, but as I paint, the expressions on the faces may start doing their own interesting thing - and I try not to force it. So many times, even if I look at a reference in the beginning, the expression, color and mood of the painting will turn out completely differently than I had initially planned. And I try to get as much of the painting done in one or two days as possible, even if I have to go slower afterwards to allow the paint to dry before making any details, since I work with oils. So it is a very quick, instinctive and purging initial process, and then it slows down a little and I really have to remember to be patient because I always want to start a new one.

Which artists are you looking at these days, and who is an influence?

I think more than artists today— though there are many I admire, I am more influenced by art movements from the past. Not in a direct sense, but more for the feeling— from Renaissance and Baroque movements for their play on light and dramatic backgrounds, to the German Expressionists and Abstract Expressionists for the pure expression in the work and experimentation with color. I look towards—backwards—to art history more than current art. I prefer museums that show human expression through the ages, more than contemporary art museums. But I do admire many artists today that do not necessarily directly influence my work, especially female artists who are breaking barriers and creating a language all their own. Cecily

Brown, Mikalene Thomas, Dana Schutz, Cindy Sherman. Julie Mehretu, Kara Walker, Claire Tabouret, Genieve Figgis, Jesse Mockrin, Lisa Yuskavage...the list goes on. So many badass women artists!

Let's talk about doodling. You paint, and yet you have two books about drawing and just plain doodling. How does that play in your daily practice?

I used to draw much more than I do today, when I worked as print a designer for several years. I missed my own drawing time so much that I would doodle any chance I got, on post-it notes and any paper I could get my hands on. That is where the Doodle books come from, compilations from those times. But today, since I draw directly on the canvas when I paint— that has taken over—and though I also like to draw ink on paper and have exhibited them several times—I definitely do it less than painting. But the initial process of my paintings is a drawing (very loose, yet still a drawing), I suppose that counts!

How did working in a more commercial art setting enhance what you do with your gallery work? I think I can see a scale and bold use of colors that must have come from commercial work.

Actually, what I learned more from working in a commercial setting is the discipline it takes to consistently create. I'm always thinking of the next "design" for my paintings, and I work very diligently, constantly. I have to actually travel and remove myself from my studio to relax and think of something else. But the scale of my works is actually a direct consequence of having been restricted to smaller sized artworks for my designs. It felt great to blow everything up in size once I got home and could work on my own art. It's also a direct consequence of being told my work was too feminine and that I should change it— and in protest I blew up the sizes of the works so you couldn't escape the femaleness. But that's a different story!

The experimental color combinations are also a consequence of working with textile designs. I try to have a surprising element of color somewhere in the painting, an accent that can tell a story or liven things up.

What was your focus for the new show at GR Gallery? What came in and out of the studio for you?

I am still working on paintings for the solo show at GR Gallery, and the desire for summertime to arrive seems to be subliminally working its way into my paintings. I had thought of painting the drama that follows me throughout my life (because it can be quite funny and I had been in a light- hearted mood), so there is some of that drama in the faces and color schemes. The title is Telenovela Life in honor of those overly dramatic Latin soap operas that were in the background at my friends' homes growing up in the Dominican Republic. But looking at the art now I realize there are a lot of beaches and summer in there too... I must want it pretty bad.

Are you the character in the work?

The characters always have a lot of me in them because they are based on emotions I have or have had, experiences that have marked me, but they aren't meant to be self-portraits. I create the alter-ego from an emotion and then set her free in the world to be herself and whomever she wants to be for the viewer. I was commenting on this with my husband, who mentioned that it was so incredible that they all had something that made them look like me, but not necessarily to each other. We came to the conclusion that they have the same mother- but different fathers. So there you go!

What's one thing you have done over the last year, either purchased or practiced, that has changed the way you work on your art?

I think the biggest thing that happened last year was Covid, and that changed a lot in my art. From basically doing nothing but paint because of the isolation, I remained very focused on the change in the art world that has suddenly brought many exhibitions and attention. I have so much work to do that it has changed my process and made me trust initial instincts more, allowing an expression to form without trying to change it—basically, to let the work flow in a quicker way, instinctively. In the past I could work on a piece for weeks, and I don't have that luxury of time anymore (though I think it's a good influence).

We have been thinking a lot about movement recently, because obviously the world was on standstill and we thought about movement in the abstract. Now the world is opening and at war and we are thinking about movement in the abstract once again. How does movement fit in your work?

That is a very interesting observation. Movement is always a part of my work, I like to express the feeling of the passing of time through a moving storm in the background, swirling clouds, ocean waves, leaves blowing, hair blowing in the wind... everything around the character is usually in movement and yet she stands still, watching you or having her moment. My work also evolves as I paint and experiment with it, so you will not easily see a "style" throughout a particular show because I allow the painting to change as I work. So, sometimes an exhibition can have several themes going, and a feeling of movement because it takes you to different places. I am quite distraught over the war in Ukraine, for example, and I can feel the characters' faces becoming more somber, even though the background isn't a war. I am not in that war, I can only be affected emotionally by what I see, and my inner self can't ignore it. The paintings always evolve with my feelings and what happens around me, and that is a constant creative force and muse.

Tania Marmolejo's solo show at GR Gallery in NYC opens June 10, 2022.

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